

Indiana's State House

Design And Restorations

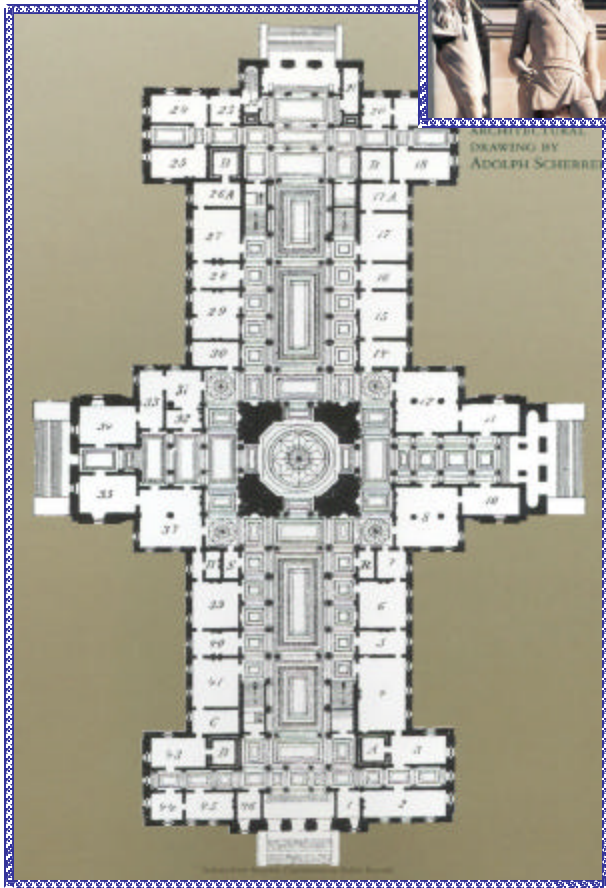
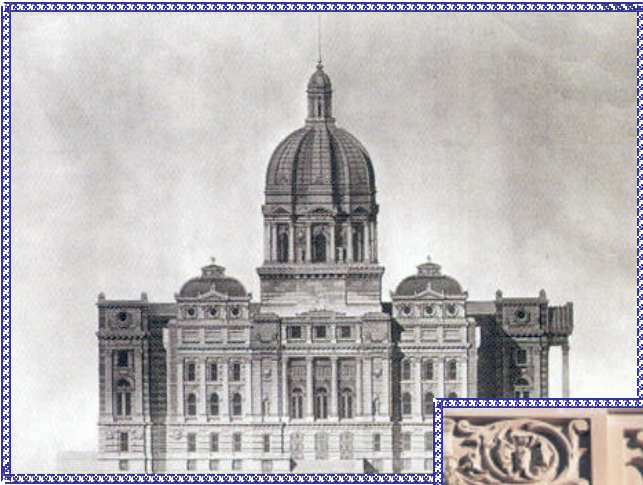
Design

At the time of construction, Indiana's State House was the most ambitiously planned state capitol in America. The architecture was influenced by the national Capitol. It is a classical Renaissance Revival style, using a cruciform plan with a central domed rotunda.

The legislative chambers were placed on either side of the rotunda. Opposite ends of the building housed the Supreme Court chamber and the State Library.

French influence can be seen at the corners of the building, which were treated as small convex-roofed pavilions.

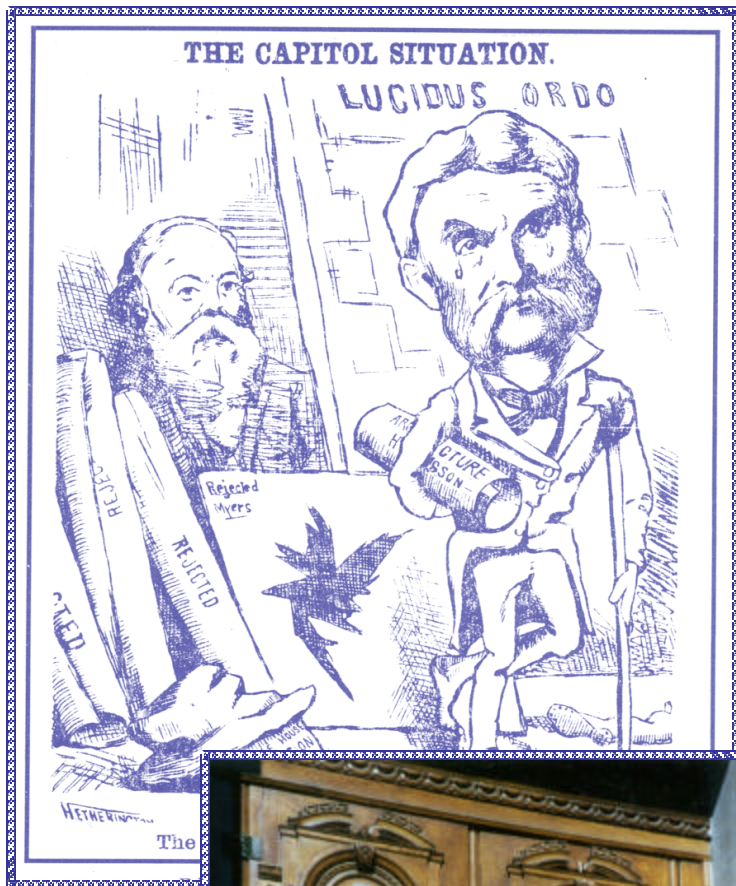
Architectural details were classical motifs of the Neo-Greco style. Columns and pilasters were made of marble shafts with limestone and granite caps and bases. Floors, stair treads and wainscoting were made of marble.



1) Building façade, Washington Street,
architectural drawing by Edwin May

2) Detail from the South façade

3) Floor plan, architectural drawing by
Adolph Scherrer



Construction Dilemmas

A Detroit architect filed suit against the Commissioners in 1879, claiming that architect Edwin May had incorporated features of his design into the final version. Local architects conducted a media campaign in support of his suit, but a federal appeals court dismissed it for lack of evidence.

May died in 1880. His draftsman, Adolph Scherrer, was named to succeed him as supervising architect.

The construction project was originally awarded to Kanmacher and Denig of Chicago. Contractors who had unsuccessfully bid on the work questioned the qualifications of the contractor and the quality of materials selected. This led to a full investigation by the House of Representatives. The allegations were found to be groundless.

The contractor lost a major financial supporter in 1883. Construction was halted, and the State House Commissioners declared the contract abandoned. New bids were solicited. Gobel and Cummings, also of Chicago, were selected to complete the building.



1) Editorial cartoon:

"The Kickers Hurt Only Themselves"

2) Monumental oak doors



The State House Opens

The inside of the building was first seen by the public on January 6, 1887, when the General Assembly held its first session in the new State House. Work was still underway in the office areas, but the House and Senate chambers, rotunda, corridors and atriums were complete.

Newspaper accounts of the event were universally favorable. One anonymous letter from a disgruntled architect unfortunately gave later generations the opposite impression. It was published alongside a glowing account in the Indianapolis Sentinel, but it became the only period description preserved in files of the Indiana State Library.

Construction continued until September 1888, when grading and seeding of the grounds were completed. The final acts of the State House Commissioners were to issue a summary of their work and to officially close their accounts on October 2, 1888.

The final cost of construction was \$1,980,969.18.

1) *State House as it opened, showing carriage ramp on the North side*

2) *Interior view of main floor corridor, 1888*

3) *"Indianapolis At Dusk" by Theodore Groll, depicting State House circa 1895*

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